



A New \$10 Million Donation Helps St. Joe's Leverage AI to Stare Down Two of Canada's Leading Causes of Blindness

\$10M donation from Thomas Kevill is helping Dr. Varun Chaudhary pair retinal imaging with artificial intelligence and machine learning to advance care for millions of Canadians living with Age-Related Macular Degeneration and Diabetic Retinopathy

Wednesday, October 1, 2025 (Hamilton, ON) – Retired chartered accountant and St. Catharines resident Thomas Kevill has donated \$10 million to St. Joseph's Healthcare Foundation, marking one of Ontario's largest philanthropic investments in eye health and ophthalmology.

The gift will accelerate groundbreaking research led by Dr. Varun Chaudhary, Chief of Ophthalmology at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton, aimed at combating two of Canada's leading causes of blindness (Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) and Diabetic Retinopathy (DR)) through the application of AI algorithms designed to speed up diagnoses, identify biomarkers to predict disease development, and deliver personalized medicine.

It's estimated more than 3.5 million Canadians are living with one of these common eye conditions. AMD is characterized by the deterioration of the macula – the middle part of the retina – and can result in a loss of clear, detailed central vision while DR is a complication of living with diabetes and can result in damage to the blood vessels in the retina leading to spots in a patient's vision. For both diseases, retinal imaging is crucial to their detection, diagnosis, and the monitoring of treatment effectiveness.

This donation builds on Mr. Kevill's earlier contributions in 2023 and 2024 totaling more than \$1 million to support and help to equip the Advanced Vitreoretinal Imaging (AVI) Lab at King Campus of St Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton. The lab is part of the Regional Eye Institute, a hub for ophthalmologic care and research.

"At the AVI lab, we're pairing the latest retinal imaging technology with expert level grading to analyze thousands of scans to understand how best to optimize outcomes for our patients. We're also developing artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms to identify patterns that will help us to detect and diagnose these conditions earlier, so we can personalize treatments and ultimately preserve our patients' vision for as long as possible," says Dr. Chaudhary, who's also a Professor of Surgery at McMaster University and the Principal Investigator at the AVI Lab.

The new \$10 million donation is designed to further the AVI laboratory's work and achieve a bold four-pronged vision:

- i. **Early Detection:** Deploying advanced retinal imaging to identify biomarkers that will help to diagnose AMD and DR sooner in patients and even hypothesize about who may be most likely to develop these conditions.

- ii. **Personalized Precision Treatment:** Using machine learning to evaluate efficacy and tailor treatments to each patient's specific disease, condition, biology and retinal anatomy.
- iii. **Novel Therapeutics:** Expanding access to and evaluating the effectiveness of new and emerging treatments through world-class clinical trials.
- iv. **Global Collaboration:** Standardizing care through international data sharing and evidence synthesis with other eye centres across the world.

"A few years ago, I experienced a detached retina, and Dr. Chaudhary performed the reattachment surgery and gave me back my sight," says Mr. Kevill. "I'm forever grateful for that. During our time together, I learned about his research pursuits. In my profession, I've learned that numbers don't lie. So, Dr. Chaudhary's interest in using numbers and evidence-backed big data to improve eye medicine resonated with me."

Gifts from grateful patients account for many of the donations hospitals like St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton receive through their foundations. In recognition of the \$10 million gift, St. Joe's has announced that the Regional Eye Institute at the King Campus will henceforth be known as the Thomas Kevill Regional Eye Institute.

"We're delighted to recognize this remarkable gift by associating Mr. Kevill's name with the Eye Institute that restored his vision and cares for the eye health of more than 1.4 million people across the Hamilton, Brantford and Niagara regions," says Sera Filice, President and CEO, St. Joseph's Healthcare Foundation.

"Innovative care delivered with unstoppable compassion is what makes St. Joe's so special," says Dr. Mike Heenan, President, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton and President and CEO, St. Joseph's Health System. "As a patient, Mr. Kevill should expect nothing less than exceptional care. As a concerned community member, his curiosity led him to ask about Dr. Chaudhary's vision for a future where data-informed personalized medicine could drive better outcomes for patients. What emerged from a care interaction evolved into a shared vision for improved eye care across our region and around the world."

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About the Thomas Kevill Regional Eye Institute

The Thomas Kevill Regional Eye Institute is located at the King Campus of St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton and supports the ophthalmology needs of 1.4 million people living across the Greater Hamilton, Niagara and Brantford regions. More than 7,000 eye surgeries take place at the Institute each year, including corneal transplants, cataract removals, vitreoretinal, oculo-plastic and glaucoma procedures. The team also sees more than 80,000 outpatient visits annually – all aimed at improving or retaining their patients' vision.

About St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton & Foundation

St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton (St. Joe's) is a leading acute care, research and academic health sciences centre renowned for its expertise in mental health and addictions, respiratory care, kidney and urinary care, robotic surgical services, cancer surgery and women's and infant's care, provided at its three main

campuses. St. Joseph's Healthcare Foundation fuels the Hospital's excellence in patient care, research, and education by working with our generous community of donors, grateful patients and friends to raise funds to advance the future of care. Learn more at www.stjoes.ca or www.stjoesfoundation.ca.

About the Research Institute of St. Joe's Hamilton

The Research Institute of St. Joe's Hamilton oversees the work of over 200 researchers and their teams as they carry out clinical, translational, evaluative, and fundamental research to improve medical diagnostics, care, and treatment. Guided by our foundational principle – *Health and Humanity for All* – we aim to transform the way medicine is practiced, improving patient quality of life and quality of care in our community and across the globe. Learn more at research.stjoes.ca.

Additional Quotes:

Lehana Thabane, Vice-President, Research, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton, Integrated Vice-President, Research, St. Joseph's Health System

"Over 3.5 million Canadians are affected by Advanced Macular Degeneration and Diabetic Retinopathy, so these conditions place a significant burden on our healthcare system and on the lives of the patients living with vision loss because of them. We're grateful to Mr. Kevill for his remarkable gift that will allow us to focus our research efforts on finding ways to prevent these conditions from taking away the precious gift of sight."

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